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# SUCCESS STORY

## Empowering Women



Story by Mrs. Carosama Abunawas, BRECDa Chairperson of Barangay Tumulutab, Zamboanga City

*Most people are not aware how difficult it is for us Muslim women to take on leadership responsibilities in our communities. Most of the time, the women lack confidence, are afraid, or are just too busy taking care of their family and households.*

*This situation of women in our culture did not deter me, though – I really wanted development, not only for my family and myself, but also for my community.*

When the USAID-funded Alliance for Mindanao Off-grid Renewable Energy (AMORE) Program came to our Barangay Tumulutab, I was elected chairperson of the Barangay Renewable Energy and Community Development Association (BRECDa) that will be composed of the household beneficiaries in our community. Since the time I was elected, I have been attending trainings and seminars conducted by AMORE in our community and in Zamboanga City proper.

I took up the challenge of leading our BRECDa because the other members are more concerned with their economic activities. The men think that attending seminars and trainings takes them away from their fishing and farming activities. The women, as I've said, are really just passive.

At first, a lot of people in my community thought I was stupid. But now, they have seen the lights... which are brighter than the kerosene wick lamps we were using before.

The AMORE-installed lights, my neighbors say, are like the ones we see in the city. I can switch them on anytime I want. Those who have small children are also happy because they can switch on the light when the baby wakes up in the middle of the night.

I realize now that it is really not easy to lead our BRECDa but I am giving my best effort, together with the rest of our officers. We impose strict measures to those who are late or do not attend our BRECDa meetings without good and valid reasons.

I tell them that this is for us. This is the first time a development program such as this came to our remote village. I tell them we are only given once-in-a-lifetime opportunities in life, sometimes there are even none, especially in the communities where AMORE now operates.

We are now looking forward to a better life, not just for us, but also for our children. We were longing for a positive change in our community, and AMORE came. We want to make this work, and we will make this work. AMORE has lighted up our lives, in more ways than one, and we will work hard to keep the light shining.